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TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo
N. Korea Proposes Talks on Resuming Cross-Border Tours

JoongAng Ilbo
In Quake-Hit Haiti, Even President Has Nowhere to Go

Dong-a Ilbo, All TVs
Haiti Quake Toll May Top 100,000

Hankook Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Job Market Likely to Remain Bleak in 2010

Hankyoreh Shinmun
ROKG Signs MOU with Companies Planning to Invest in Sejong City Even Before Passage of Sejong City Revision Bill

Segye Ilbo
ROK Wins Deal to Build Jordan's Nuclear Reactor

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The ROKG announced yesterday that it would provide emergency supplies worth \$1 million and send relief workers to Haiti which has been devastated by a massive earthquake. (All)

North Korea yesterday proposed working-level talks on resuming cross-border tours to Mt. Kumgang and the North's border city of Kaesong from Jan. 26-27 at Mt. Kumgang. (All)

According to a recent report by U.S. industries to the USTR, 21 U.S. agro-livestock, food and pharmaceutical companies and groups are strongly dissatisfied with the ROK's high tariffs and various non-tariff barriers, and called on the USTR to redress the situation. (Dong-a)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth, in a Jan. 13 event hosted by the Korea Economic Institute in Washington, expressed hope that relevant countries will convene soon to discuss the North's nuclear issue. (Segye, KBS, VoiceofPeople)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Conservative Segye Ilbo, state-run KBS and VoiceofPeople, a progressive internet news outlet, quoted Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth as saying in a Jan. 13 event hosted by the Korea Economic Institute in Washington: "When North Korea comes back to the Six-Party Talks and resumes making progress for the goal of denuclearization, the Security Council will examine the appropriateness of a revision of the sanctions resolution." He was further quoted: "We hope sometime in the next few weeks or months we could be back to the diplomatic process and begin then seriously brushing up the terminology and hopefully making some progress."

-Haiti Earthquake

All ROK media covered the ROKG's announcement yesterday that it would provide emergency supplies worth \$1 million and send relief workers to Haiti, devastated by a powerful earthquake that may have left hundreds of thousands dead.

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Conservative Dong-a Ilbo editorialized: "It is high time for the international community to extend a helping hand in the spirit of humanitarianism, lest the Haitians collapse into despair. ... Given the ROK's status in the world, the ROKG's planned \$1 million of relief aid seems rather insufficient. ROK companies and civic groups should also come forward to help. The ROK owes a lot to international society. From a humanitarian and moral perspective, it should proactively help a nation like Haiti that cannot stand on its own feet."

An editorial in conservative Chosun Ilbo echoed Dong-a Ilbo's argument, writing in the headline: "Massive Earthquake in Haiti; ROK Should Provide Help In Line with Its Status as the World's 10th Largest Economy"

Moderate Hankook Ilbo commented in an editorial: "The earthquake in Haiti is a disaster in itself. However, the country's poor infrastructure, corruption and incompetence as a state have made this disaster grow out of control. ... This is why the international community, while rushing to help the country, dwells on the man-made aspects of the disaster."

FEATURES

U.S. AGRO-LIVESTOCK, FOOD AND PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES STRONGLY DISSATISFIED WITH ROK'S TRADE BARRIERS
(Dong-a Ilbo, January 15, Page B1)

By Correspondent Choe young-hae

U.S. agro-livestock, food and pharmaceutical companies and groups are reportedly strongly dissatisfied with the ROK's high trade barriers. These groups demanded that the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) call on the ROK to remove its high tariffs and various non-tariff barriers.

The U.S. industry recently submitted an opinion on barriers to ROK market to the USTR. The 2010 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers will be drawn up from this data and opinions on barriers to other countries and will be reported to President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress by late March. The USTR has put pressure on the U.S.'s trading partners based on this report. This

time, 50 U.S. companies and groups presented 104 opinions on the U.S.'s 60 major trading partners.

Twenty one companies and groups from different fields voiced their discontent with the ROK. They include 8 agro-livestock companies and groups, 5 food companies, 3 industrial goods companies, 2 pharmaceutical and medical device companies, 2 service companies and 1 liquor company. They expressed strong dissatisfaction with high tariffs (18 to 304%), complicated quarantine procedures, prohibition of food coloring, cautionary labeling requirements, duplicate tests, and certification requirements.

The U.S. Rice Federation in Arlington, Virginia demanded that the ROK fully complies with its quota for U.S. rice imports that goes to consumers as "table rice."

The Northwest Fruit Growers' Association demanded that the ROK lift high tariffs on apples (45%), cherries (24%), and pears (45%).

This Association's annual fruit production is worth 2.5 billion dollars. The American Potato Trade Alliance argued that high tariffs on frozen and dehydrated potato products should be removed and that the ROK's import quota for dehydrated potato pieces should be changed in accordance with the international standard, saying that the (current) quota amounts to only one shipment per year.

ConAgra Foods, one of the U.S. leading packaged food companies, made an issue of an 18 percent tariff on frozen potato pieces, for which the ROK depends entirely on imports. The company said that since

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the ROK already signed the FTA with the EU, a potato exporter, and is in the final stage of the FTA negotiations with Canada, the tariff on the U.S. products should be promptly lifted so that the U.S. will not lose the ROK market to other nations. Yum! Restaurants International, a Dallas, Texas-based company operating over 34,000 franchise restaurants, claimed that high tariffs on farm produce and restaurant equipment should be removed.

A group representative of food, beverage, and general consumer product companies complained that the ROK, the fifth largest market for U.S. high-priced food products, slaps excessively high tariffs on their products. The group also pointed out that the ROK's regulations on quarantine inspections and food labeling changed so many times. Herbalife, a multinational manufacturer and seller of supplementary food products, said that high duties on their herbal teas and cosmetics are high trade barriers.

The U.S. Brewers' Association argued that since a 20 percent tariff on liquor is too high and as the ROK bans TV ads for liquor containing more than 17 percent alcohol, U.S. brewers cannot increase their brand recognition (in the ROK.)

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America said that the ROKG's new measures to control pharmaceutical expenditures (the Policy for the Optimization of the Pharmaceutical Expenditures in Korean National Health Insurance System) do not have a clear standard for innovative new medicines and raised concerns that U.S. pharmaceuticals might be subject to a discriminatory investigation by the Korea Fair Trade Commission, which is now investigating domestic and innovative drug makers.

Among the 21 business entities that expressed dissatisfaction about the ROK's trade barriers to the USTR, 15 groups urged an early ratification of the ROK-U.S. FTA, which would remove tariff barriers. However, with the mid-term elections slated for November, the Obama Administration is sensitive to the opinion of U.S. automakers and their labor unions, which are opposed to the ROK-U.S. FTA, and therefore, many in Washington political circles think that it will not be easy to get the FTA ratified within this year.

STEPHENNS